

R E M A R K S

This is to acknowledge that Claims 7-18 were allowed in the above-identified Office Action, whereas Claims 3-6 were acknowledged to be allowable and only Claims 1 and 2 were rejected. That rejection was for anticipation by the cited Obara patent. By this response, however, Claim 2 has been canceled while its substance has been added to Claim 1. In this regard, it is believed that Claim 1 is now patentable over the cited references for the reasons given below, and that new independent Claim 19 is also allowable.

First, Applicants point out that the invention of Claim 1 may be characterized as requiring an image reading portion displaced to the rear side of an image forming apparatus (as shown, e.g., in Fig. 11), and an operation portion is disposed on the front side of the image reading portion and on the upstream side in a sheet delivering direction (as shown, e.g., in Fig. 2). Furthermore, the sheet delivered onto a sheet stacking portion is partially exposed to the outside on the front side of the image reading portion (also shown in Fig. 2). By these means a user can easily remove the sheet. Also, the invention of Claim 1 requires that the sheet stacking portion, on which the sheet having the formed image is stacked, is disposed above the image recording portion, thus reducing the installation space required for the apparatus.

The cited Obara patent, on the other hand discloses an image forming apparatus comprising: a photoconductor 17 and a transfer member 21 for forming an image on a sheet; an eject tray 36 on which the sheet having the formed image is stacked; and a scanning unit 5 for reading an image on an original, wherein the scanning unit 5 is disposed

on the rear side of the apparatus. In this regard, an operation portion 45 of Obara is not disposed on the upstream side in the sheet delivering direction, even though the operation portion 45 is disposed on the front side of the image reading portion. Also, in the Obara patent, no part of the sheet delivered onto the sheet stacking portion is exposed to the outside on the front side of the image reading portion. Therefore, the Obara patent, which fails to disclose this claimed requirement of Applicants' Claim 1 does not provide the technical advantage whereby a user can easily remove the sheet as in the invention. Moreover, in the Obara patent, the sheet stacking portion is not disposed above the image recording portion. The sheet stacking portion of Obara is disposed in front of the image forming apparatus. Therefore, the installation space of the apparatus must be expanded by the size of the sheet stacking portion, so that Obara does not provide the technical advantage whereby the image forming apparatus can be reduced in size as to reduce the installation space of the apparatus as in the invention. For these reasons it is believed the Claim 1 as well as its dependent Claims 3-6 are allowable.

Referring now to new Claim 19, there is required an image reading portion disposed so that the rear side of the casing of the image reading portion is extended rearward from the apparatus (e.g., in Fig. 11), and so that a sheet delivered from an image recording portion onto a sheet stacking portion is partially exposed to the outside on the front side of the image reading portion (e.g., Fig. 2). Also, the invention of Claim 19 is characterized in that the sheet stacking portion on which the sheet having the formed image is stacked is disposed above the image recording portion. Again, according to this claimed

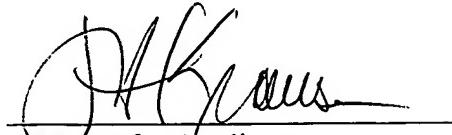
requirement of the invention, the image forming apparatus can be reduced in size so as to reduce its required installation space.

As is apparent from Figure 3 of the Obara patent, however, the rear side position of the casing of the image reading portion does not protrude rearward from the image forming apparatus. Also, in Obara no part of the sheet delivered onto the sheet stacking portion is exposed to the outside on the front side of the image reading portion. Therefore, the Obara patent does not provide the technical advantage whereby a user can easily remove the sheet as in the invention of Claim 19. As also discussed above, the sheet stacking portion in Obara is not disposed above the image recording portion, but is disposed in front of the image forming apparatus. Therefore, the installation space of the apparatus must be expanded so that Obara does not provide the technical advantage wherein the image forming apparatus can be reduced in size.

For these reasons it is believed that Claim 19 is also allowable, wherefore the issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance is solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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